Plenary I: Understanding the Social-Emotional and Trauma-Related Needs of Youth

June 4, 2019

The National Technical Assistance Center
for the Education of
Neglected or Delinquent
Children and Youth (NDTAC)

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Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions

- Social-Emotional Learning and Its Intersections With Other Behavioral Supports

- Understanding and Building Trauma-Sensitive Educational Settings

- Wrap-Up and Reflection

- Close

Presenters

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Social-Emotional Learning and Its Intersections With Other Behavioral Supports

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What Is Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)?

- SEL is a process for helping children, youth, and adults develop the basic skills necessary for a safe and happy life.

- SEL teaches the skills we all need to handle ourselves, our relationships, and our work effectively and ethically.

Conceptualizing SEL: CASEL's Approach

Social & Emotional Learning Core Competencies

Source: http://casel.org

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Students Who Are Self-Aware

- Accurately assess their feelings, interests, values, and strengths.

- Maintain a well-grounded sense of self-confidence.

- Recognize and accurately label simple emotions such as sadness, anger, and happiness.

- Analyze factors that trigger their stress reactions.

- Analyze how various expressions of emotion affect other people.

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Students Who Self-Manage

- Regulate their emotions to handle stress, control impulses, and persevere in overcoming obstacles.

- Set and monitor progress toward personal and academic goals.

- Express emotions appropriately.

- Describe the steps of setting and working toward goals.

- Make a plan to achieve a short-term personal or academic goal.

- Identify strategies to make use of available school and community resources and overcome obstacles in achieving a long-term goal.

Students Who Are Socially Aware

- Take the perspective of others and empathize with others.

- Recognize and appreciate individual and group similarities and differences.

- Recognize and use family, school, and community resources.

- Identify verbal, physical, and situational cues indicating how others feel.

- Predict others' feelings and perspectives in various situations.

- Evaluate their ability to empathize with others.

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Students Who Have Good Relationships

- Establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships based on cooperation.

- Resist inappropriate social pressure.

- Prevent, manage, and resolve interpersonal conflict.

- Seek help when needed.

- Describe approaches to making and keeping friends.

- Being cooperative and working on a team to promote group goals.

- Evaluate the uses of communication skills with peers, teachers, and family members.

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Students Who Make Responsible Decisions

- Make decisions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, appropriate social norms, respect for others, and likely consequences of various actions.

- Apply decision-making skills to academic and social situations.

- Contribute to the well-being of their school and community.

- Identify a range of decisions they make at school.

- Evaluate strategies for resisting peer pressure to engage in unsafe or unethical activities.

- Analyze how their current decision making affects their college and career prospects.

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What Is, Is Not, and Can Be SEL?

What Is, Is Not, and Can Be SEL?

- Executive function: yes
- Grit: yes
- Mindfulness: yes
- Emotional intelligence: yes
- Character education: oftentimes
  - Effective character education incorporates SEL:
    - Caring School Communities
    - PATHS
    - Positive Action
    - Lions Quest
    - Facing History and Ourselves

What Is, Is Not, and Can Be SEL?

- Providing children and youth with social-emotional support: no
  - Can support SEL and be supported by SEL

- School climate and conditions for learning (CFL): no
  - Can support SEL and be supported by SEL
  - Some disagreement in field, but climate and CFL are "conditions," and SEL, at least in the West, is primarily individual

- Restorative practices: yes and no
  - SEL can be foundational for restorative practices
  - Restorative practices can teach and reinforce SEL

- Positive Youth Development: no
  - Can support SEL and be supported by SEL

What Is, Is Not, and Can Be SEL?

- Educational mind-sets: no
  - SEL can be foundational to developing mind-sets (e.g., self-regulation, attentional control)

- Positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS): no
  - PBIS and SEL can be aligned

- Resilience: no
  - Can be supported by SEL
  - Adversity can compromise key social-emotional skills and attributes

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What Is, Is Not, and Can Be SEL?

- Life skills: partial
  - Key component
- 21st century learning skills: partial
- Deeper learning: partial

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Why SEL: Some Reasons

- Addressing the *Trauma and the Adversities of Poverty*
  - Compromised attachment
  - Compromised ability to self-regulate
- Developing *Portable Assets* in an evolving world
- Empowering learners
  - A prerequisite to academic mind-sets
  - Tools for cooperative learning
  - Self-regulated learning
- Helping students stay out of harm's way
  - Avoid school-related unsafe and antisocial behavior
  - Avoid community-related unsafe antisocial behavior
  - Making values real
  - Moral education is not enough
  - Building as well as building upon one's compassion

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Challenges

- Cultural competency
- Youth and family engagement
- Assessment
- Conceptual clarity
- Implementation quality
- Integration into practice settings

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Understanding and Building Trauma-Sensitive Educational Settings

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Impact of Trauma

Social &
Emotional
Learning

SELF-
MANAGEMENT

SELF-
AWARENESS

RESPONSIBLE
DECISION-
MAKING

RELATIONSHIP
SKILLS

SOCIAL
AWARENESS

Exposure to trauma can negatively affect:

- Our capacity to self-regulate.

- Our awareness of self and others.

- Our ability to engage socially and form relationships.

- Our ability to attend to information, accurately assess situations, and make decisions.

Defining Trauma

*An **event**, series of events, or set of circumstances that is **experienced** by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening, overwhelms a person's ability to cope, and that has adverse **effects** on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.*

(SAMHSA, 2014; NCTSN)

Trauma Types

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

The three types of ACEs include

ABUSE	NEGLECT	HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION	
Physical	Physical	Mental Illness	Incarcerated Relative
Emotional	Emotional	Mother treated violently	Substance Abuse
Sexual		Divorce	

The Pair of ACEs

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Maternal Depression

Physical & Emotional Neglect

Emotional & Sexual Abuse

Divorce

Mental Illness

Substance Abuse

Incarceration

Domestic Violence

Homelessness

Adverse Community Environments

Poverty

Violence

Discrimination

Poor Housing Quality & Affordability

Community Disruption

Lack of Opportunity, Economic Mobility & Social Capital
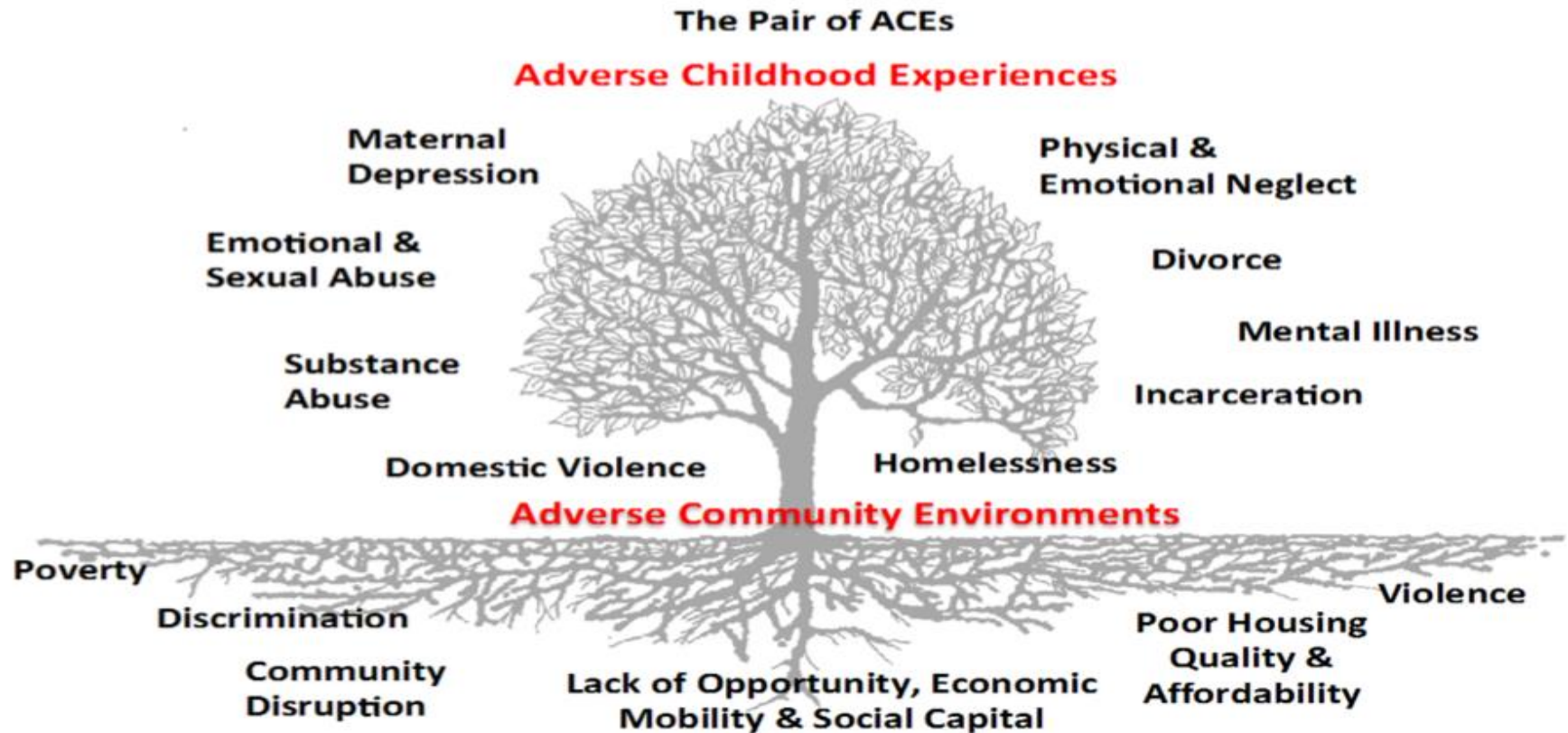
Ellis, W., Dietz, W. (2017) A New Framework for Addressing Adverse Childhood and Community Experiences: The Building Community Resilience (BCR) Model. Academic Pediatrics. 17 (2017) pp. S86-S93. DOI information: 10.1016/j.acap.2016.12.011

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Prevalence of Childhood Adversity and Trauma

- **More than two thirds** of children report experiencing a traumatic event by age 16, such as a serious accident, natural disaster, or experiencing or witnessing violence.

- Approximately **two out of three** children were exposed to violence in their homes or communities in the past year.
    - 50% of youth report more than one type of victimization.
    - 1 in 6 youth report 5 or more direct exposures to violence.

- **1 in 10** children nationally experienced **3 or more** ACEs.

- **Economic hardship** was the most common adversity reported nationally, followed by **divorce and separation.**

(Copeland et al., 2007; Finklehor et al., 2015)

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Groups at Increased Risk

- Youth of color ages 12 to 19
- African American youth living in urban, low-income communities
- American Indian/Alaska Native children and youth
- Children and youth who have disabilities
- Refugees
- Children and youth who are LGBTQ
- Children and youth who are homeless and living in poverty
- Children and youth involved in JJ and CW systems

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Trauma- and Justice-Involved Youth

- **Up to 90%** of justice-involved youth report exposure to at least one traumatic event.

- Rates of exposure to multiple forms of trauma are high (polyvictimization):

  - 35% report 4 or more types
  - 55% exposed 6 or more times

- For **62%** of justice-involved youth, age of onset of trauma exposure was within the first 5 years of life.
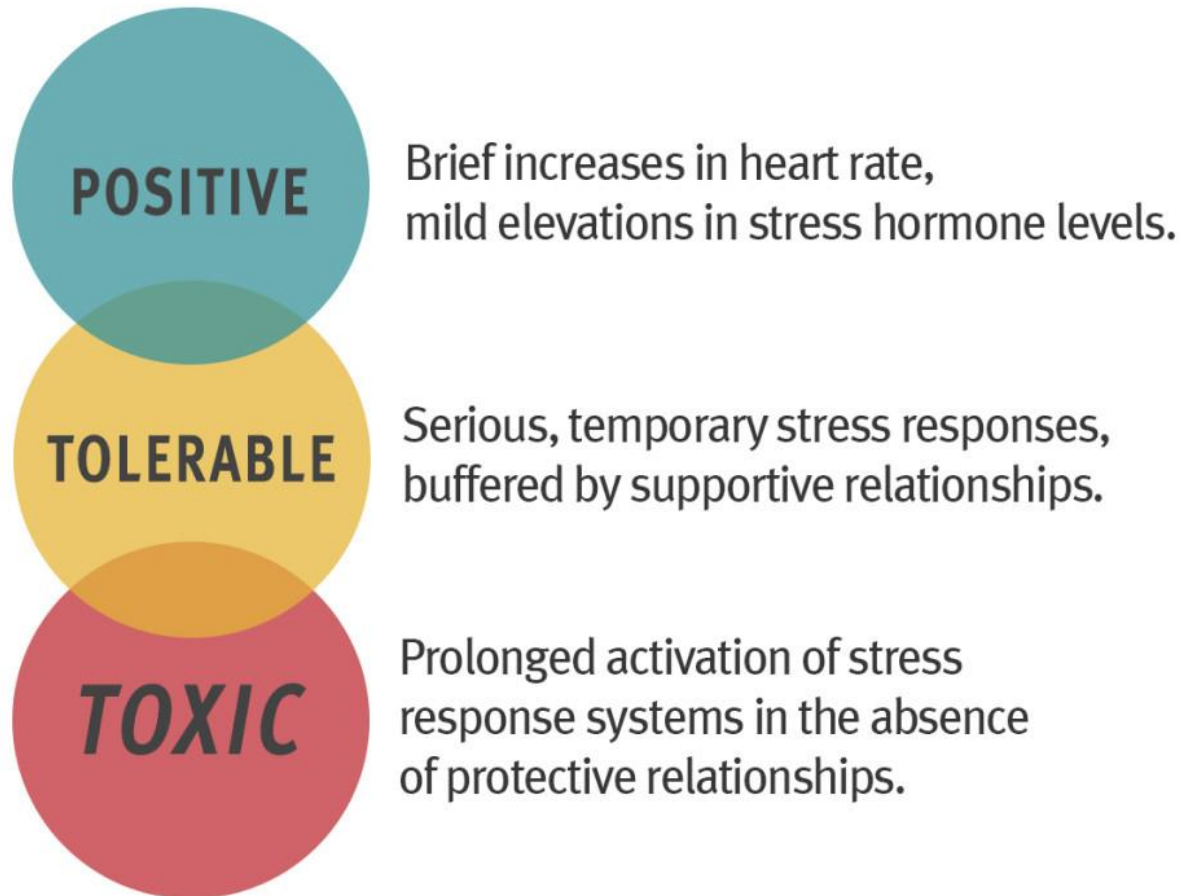
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Effects of early, prolonged adversity and trauma are particularly significant.

"Early experiences are built into our bodies, creating biological 'memories' that shape development, for better or for worse."

— Center on the Developing Child

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Impact of Trauma

POSITIVE — Brief increases in heart rate, mild elevations in stress hormone levels.

TOLERABLE — Serious, temporary stress responses, buffered by supportive relationships.

TOXIC — Prolonged activation of stress response systems in the absence of protective relationships.

(Center on the Developing Child)

Children experiencing toxic stress invest long-term energy into surviving instead of thriving.

Impact of Trauma

- Smaller brain size and structures
- Difficulty identifying, expressing, and managing feelings
- Extreme responses in school settings
- Increased behavioral issues and risk-taking behaviors, such as self-harm and substance abuse
- Difficulties with attention, learning, and memory
- Difficulty trusting others and forming healthy relationships
- Higher rates of absences, suspensions, or expulsions and referral to special education
- Lower test scores, increased risk of failing a grade
- Low self-esteem and poor self-image
- Increased risk for mental health issues
- Increased risk for other system involvement

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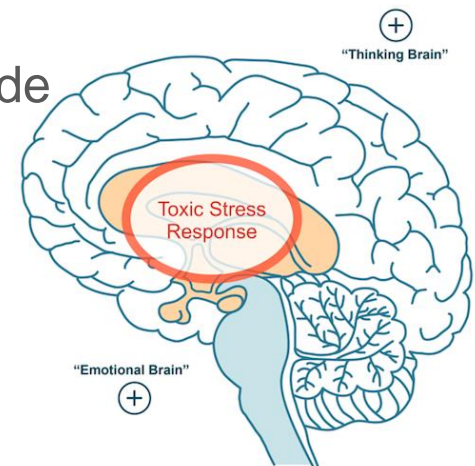
Impact of Trauma

Excessive stress affects how well we develop and use executive function skills.
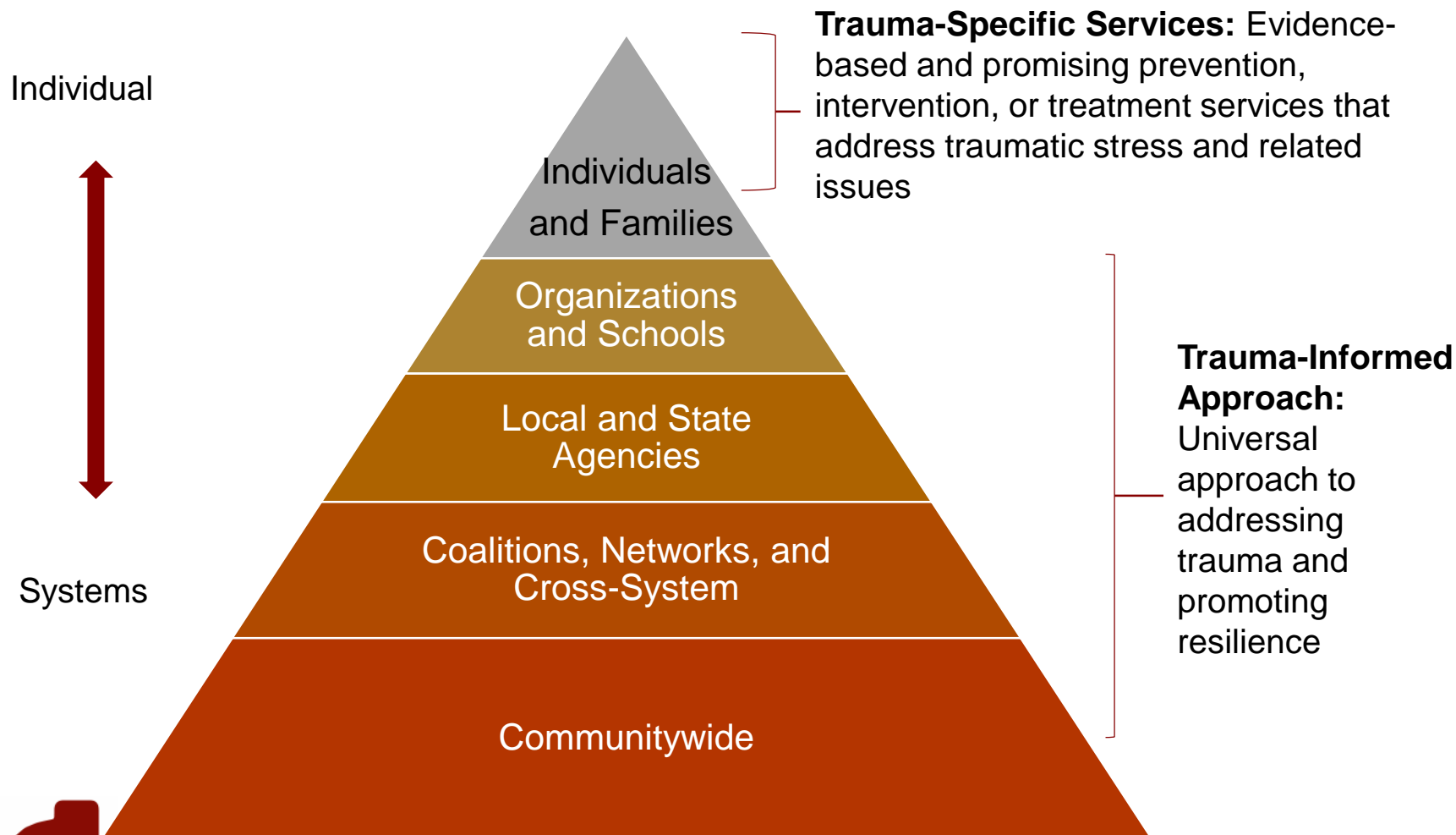
Stressful Stimulus

Primarily Automatic Response
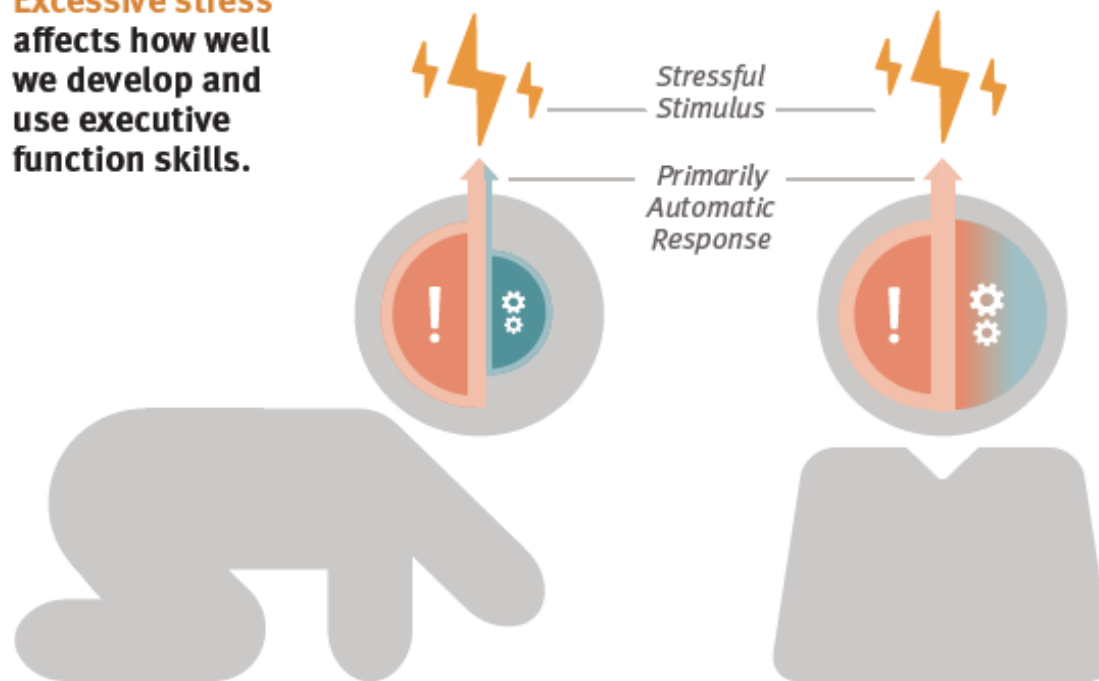
Early Childhood

Severe, frequent stress redirects children's brain development away from planning and impulse control toward building the capacity for rapid threat response.

Adulthood

Excessive stress overloads adults' ability to use executive function and intentional self-regulation skills, leaving them to rely primarily on automatic responses.

(Center on the Developing Child) 31

Trauma-Informed Approach

Individual

Systems

Individuals and Families

Organizations and Schools

Local and State Agencies

Coalitions, Networks, and Cross-System

Communitywide

Trauma-Specific Services: Evidence-based and promising prevention, intervention, or treatment services that address traumatic stress and related issues

Trauma-Informed Approach: Universal approach to addressing trauma and promoting resilience
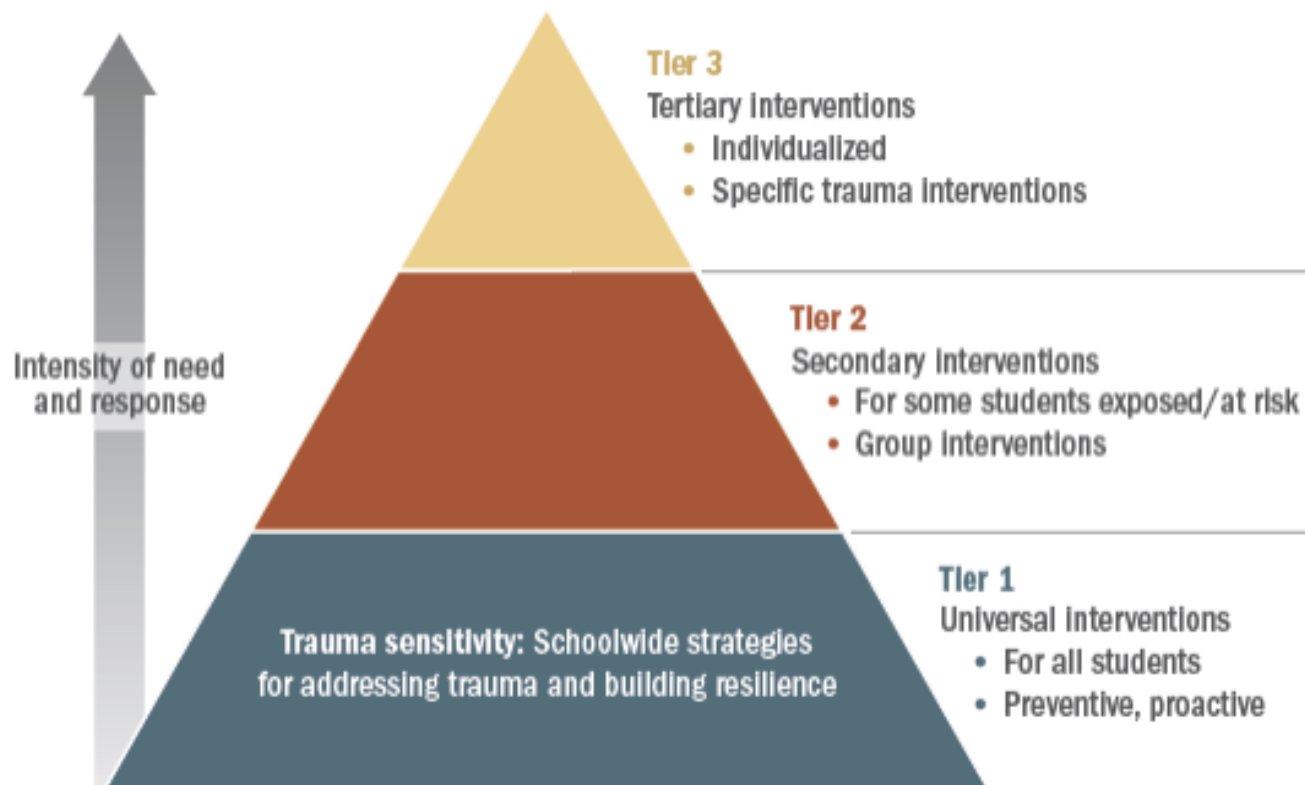
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Understanding Trauma Sensitivity

In trauma-sensitive educational settings, all aspects of the environment—from workforce training to engagement with students and families to procedures and policies—are grounded in an understanding of trauma and its impact and are designed to promote resilience for all.

The approach may require changes to mission, vision, practices, policies, and culture.

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Multi-tiered Approach to Addressing Trauma in Schools

Intensity of need and response

Tier 3
Tertiary interventions
- Individualized
- Specific trauma interventions

Tier 2
Secondary interventions
- For some students exposed/at risk
- Group interventions

Tier 1
Universal interventions
- For all students
- Preventive, proactive

Trauma sensitivity: Schoolwide strategies for addressing trauma and building resilience

(American Institutes for Research, 2018)

Traditional to Trauma Sensitive

- **Judgmental:** Understands behaviors as the result of individual deficits (What's wrong with you?). Uses negative labels.

- **Individual:** Focus for change is on the individual. Solution is for youth to "fix" their behavior.

- **Power Over/Obedience:** Views adult authority and control as critical to student success.

- **Punitive:** Punitive discipline strategies are the primary approach.

- **Siloed:** Support for students exposed to trauma should be left to counseling professionals.

- **Curious:** Considers whether behaviors may be ways of coping with traumatic experiences. Avoids labels.

- **Environmental:** Takes a more holistic view and considers how external factors influence youth.

- **Power With/Collaboration:** Encourages student and family choice and control.

- **Restorative:** Positive, strengths-based approaches to discipline are used most often.

- **Integrated:** Assumes a shared responsibility for addressing trauma.

Trauma-Sensitive Strategies

- Educating all staff about trauma and its effects
- Promoting a safe physical and emotional environment
- Eliminating retraumatizing practices (e.g., harsh, punitive approaches)
- Providing trauma-sensitive assessments and services
- **Building students' social-emotional skills to cope with adversity**
- Promoting youth and family voice, choice, and empowerment
- Adopting policies and procedures that align with and support a universal, trauma-sensitive approach

Trauma Sensitivity and SEL

Trauma Sensitivity	Social-Emotional Learning
Environment-level approach to reduce exposure to stressful experiences and create a trauma-sensitive context	Individual-level approach that builds competencies for supporting resilience for all students
Enhances adult awareness of the effects of trauma on students' social-emotional well-being, behavior, and academic success	Offers strategies that can be used by all adults and at all tiers to foster healing for students affected by trauma
Promotes the importance of SEL as a key component of a trauma-sensitive school	Promotes strategies that support a trauma-sensitive approach

Trauma-Sensitive Schools Training Package

Trauma-Sensitive Schools
TRAINING PACKAGE

UNDERSTAND · BUILD · LEAD

The *Trauma-Sensitive Schools Training Package* includes a roadmap and tools for adopting a trauma-sensitive approach. The training package supports school and district administrators and staff to:

- Understand trauma in a broad and inclusive way
- Recognize the effects of trauma on students, families, school administrators and staff, and communities
- Learn a process for implementing a schoolwide trauma-sensitive approach
- Integrate trauma-sensitive practices into their daily operations

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Trauma-Sensitive Schools Training Package

UNDERSTAND Trauma and Its Impact

- E-resource
- Companion slide presentation and activity packet for in-person training

BUILD Trauma-Sensitive Schools

- Online module for all staff
- Handouts
- Facilitation Guide

LEAD Trauma-Sensitive Schools

- Online module for leaders
- Action Guide
- Facilitation Guide

Get it here!

https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/trauma-sensitive-schools-training-package

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Reflections and Wrap-Up

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